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Sent: Thur 3/3/2016 4:40:45 PM
Subject: FW: Flint Readout 03/02/16
[2016.03.01-Metro Monitor.xlsx](#)
[2016.02.28-03.06 Flint Michigan clips.xlsx](#)

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Sent: Wednesday, March 02, 2016 5:34 PM
Subject: Flint Readout 03/02/16

Flint Water Crisis: Feds Expand Programs to Help Kids Affected by Lead

By Maggie Fox, NBC News 03/02/16 4:36 PM

The federal government said Wednesday it will expand educational programs Flint, Michigan, to try to help kids get past the effects of having lead in their drinking water. "Early education is one of the most important things we can do to help children overcome the effects of lead," said Dr. Nicole Lurie, who heads preparedness and response at HHS. "This funding for Head Start and Early Head Start will allow Flint's existing Head Start programs to provide enhanced and expanded services, including additional classrooms, home visiting support, and transportation for families who need to visit the doctor."

Head Start program expanded to help Flint's kids

By Karen Bouffard, Detroit News 03/02/16 3:29 PM

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will expand the Head Start program in Flint to provide increased behavioral and educational services to children affected by lead exposure, the agency announced Wednesday. “Lead really has the ability to slow down brain development,” said Dr. Nicole Lurie, assistant secretary for preparedness and response and the lead federal official for Flint. “A huge thing is to stimulate children’s brains early in life ... with all the kinds of things that Head Start and Early Head Start offer.”

HHS announces \$3.6M in emergency Flint funds

By Lydia Wheeler, The Hill 03/02/16 3:09 PM

The Obama administration announced \$3.6 million in emergency funding Wednesday for early childhood education programs in Flint, Mich., to help children affected by the city’s contaminated water supply. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said this one-time emergency funding will go to expand Head Start and Early Head Start services in the city. Dr. Nicole Laurie, assistant secretary for preparedness and response at HHS, said lead is a neurotoxin that affects the nervous system and brain development in children who are exposed. Because the brain grows most rapidly in early childhood, she said Head Start programs are crucial was to keep the brain stimulated. “Lead has the ability to slow down brain development and as a result, if you don’t get on top of it, it can lead to developmental delays and potentially children not reaching their full potential as they grow into adulthood,” she said.

Head Start expansion announced for Flint children

By Katrease Stafford, Detroit Free Press 03/02/16 3:06 PM

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced Wednesday \$3.6 million in emergency funds to expand Head Start and Early Head Start services for preschoolers who’ve been affected by Flint’s lead contaminated water supply. The funding— a onetime grant —will immediately expand the services to the children by providing additional classrooms, home visiting support and transportation for families who need to visit the doctor, Dr. Nicole Lurie, HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, said Wednesday during a conference call. Specifically, the funding will be used to open three additional classrooms serving 51 children beginning March 2016 through June 2017 for children in most affected areas. Lurie said it will also lengthen the current school year by three weeks, bringing the total duration to 36 weeks, and provide Head Start comprehensive services to 78 preschoolers enrolled in the school’s special education program. An additional 24 additional children will also be enrolled in the home-based model, Lurie said.

Former administrator denies resisting Flint water emergency order

By Gary Ridley, MLIVE 03/02/16 4:45 PM

Former city administrator Natasha Henderson denied she ever tried to prevent an emergency declaration from being declared over the city's water crisis, but instead tried to make leaders aware of the different outcomes their actions could have. Henderson released a statement Wednesday, March 2, through her attorney David Sanford, after her name surfaced in emails released by Gov. Rick Snyder last week.

Dems say state blocked Flint return to Detroit water

By Paul Egan, Detroit Free Press 03/02/16 1:15 PM

Michigan Democrats said Wednesday that the state of Michigan blocked Flint from returning to Lake Huron water from the Detroit water system when it agreed to grant the city an emergency loan of \$7 million in April 2015. The loan, approved on April 29 of last year by the Local Emergency Financial Assistance Loan Board, and intended to erase the city's operating deficit so it could begin to emerge from state-ordered emergency management, included conditions requiring that the city not return to the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department as its source of drinking water, according to records the Michigan Democratic Party obtained under Michigan's Freedom of Information Act.

Michigan Restricted Flint From Switching Water in Loan Deal

By David Eggert, AP for ABC News 03/02/16 1:15 PM

The state of Michigan restricted Flint from switching water sources last April unless it got approval from Gov. Rick Snyder's administration under the terms of a \$7 million loan needed to help transition the city from state management, according to a document released Wednesday. By the time the loan agreement was in place, cries about Flint's water quality were growing louder, though it had not yet been discovered that the improperly treated Flint River water was causing lead to leach from aging pipes and put children at risk.

Michigan lawmaker calls on Gov. Rick Snyder to resign over 'indifference' to Flint water crisis

By Brian McVicar, MLIVE 03/02/16 1:48 PM

House Democratic leader Tim Greimel called on Gov. Rick Snyder to resign Wednesday, saying the Ann Arbor Republican showed "negligence and indifference" in his handling of the Flint water crisis. Greimel, pointing to information contained in thousands of pages of emails Snyder's office has released in recent weeks, said it is "inconceivable" that the governor wasn't aware of mounting concern over the safety of Flint's water prior to October. That's when the state officially acknowledged the water was unsafe to drink and contained high lead levels.

House Dem leader Greimel calls for Snyder to resign

By Jonathan Oosting, Detroit News 03/02/16 12:46 [video clip]

Michigan House Minority Leader Tim Greimel called on Gov. Rick Snyder to resign Wednesday because of the Flint water crisis, "given the actions of negligence and indifference." The Auburn Hills Democrat made the announcement on the same day that the Michigan Democratic Party said the Snyder administration blocked Flint from returning to the Detroit water system in April 2015 despite concerns with the city's drinking water.

Democrats call for state treasurer to resign for role in Flint water crisis

By Ron Fonger, MLIVE 03/02/16 12:25 PM

Michigan Treasurer Nick Khouri should resign for his role in extending an emergency loan to the city of Flint that required continued use of the Flint River despite health and safety concerns, state Democrats said today, March 2. State Democratic Party Chairman Brandon Dillon called for Khouri to step down from his job during a conference call with reporters today and released the emergency loan agreement signed by the state treasurer and former Flint emergency manager Jerry Ambrose on April 29, 2015.

Hillary Clinton speaks on Flint water crisis during Super Tuesday speech

By Roberto Acosta, MLIVE 03/01/16 11:44 PM

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton spoke of the story she's learned about the city of Flint during her Super Tuesday speech. Clinton and fellow candidate Bernie Sanders, who stopped in Flint for a Feb. 25 community forum at Woodside Church on the city's east side, are set to take part in the March 6 CNN Democratic presidential debate at The Whiting Auditorium ahead of the state's primary two days later.

CNN Democratic Debate In Flint: Environmental Racism Should Be Focus, Social Justice Groups

By Aaron Morrison, International Business Times 03/02/16 11:09 AM

A coalition of environmental and racial justice groups called Wednesday for the Democratic National Committee to make environmental racism the focus of Sunday's presidential debate in Flint, Michigan, between former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont. The coalition, which allies nearly 20 organizations, plans to deliver more than 80,000 petition signatures to the DNC's headquarters in Washington, according to a statement.

Coalition Calls On CNN To Focus On Environmental Justice In Upcoming Democratic Debate

By Media Matters For America, 03/02/16 11:40 AM

A coalition of 18 climate and civil rights advocacy organizations is calling on CNN and the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to focus on racial and environmental justice in the next Democratic presidential primary debate. The upcoming debate will be held in Flint, Michigan, which is currently dealing with a devastating water crisis after corroded lead pipes poisoned the city's drinking water and sickened its residents. The coalition stated Flint's crisis is just "the latest tragic example of a long trend of communities of color and low wealth being poisoned with crumbling infrastructure, polluted air, toxic dumps, and tainted water."

When is Next Democratic Debate? Schedule, Start Time and Date (March 6), Issues, and How to Live Stream or Watch Online

By Mark Rollins, Gospel Herald Society 03/02/16 3:30 PM

Now that Super Tuesday has ended, the results posted on the New York Times reveal that Hilary Clinton is in the lead over Bernie Sanders. The debate will take place on March 6 in Flint, MI, which has a lot of big issues involving water and gun control, and it is three days away from the Michigan primary. This is what is known about the next Democratic Debate Start Time and Date, as well as how to live stream or watch online. According to MLive, the seventh Democratic debate will take place at 8 PM on March 6, at the Whiting Auditorium. It will be broadcasted on CNN, and those that want to live stream or watch the debate online can just go to cnn.com and check CNN Live TV around that time to see it.

How Snyder's chief of staff wrestled with Flint water, with few victories

By John Bebow, MLIVE 03/02/16 2:49 PM

Deep in the more than 10,000 pages of Flint-related emails released last weekend by Gov. Rick Snyder, there is a fine-print, small-font spreadsheet of Dennis Muchmore's workload. As chief of staff for the governor, Muchmore was responsible in 2015 for no fewer than 76 "priority projects," according to that document.

DeLauro to travel to Flint ahead of key Michigan primary

By Ana Radelat, The CT Mirror 03/02/16

U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-3rd District, will join House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and nearly two dozen other progressive Democrats on a trip to Flint, Mich., on Friday to rally behind the victims of the city's water crisis – and perhaps try to give Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton a boost. DeLauro and the other members of the congressional delegation to tour Flint will hold a "Speak Out" with families affected by the water crisis.

State loan prohibited Flint from rejoining Detroit water system

By Emily Lawler, MLIVE 03/02/16 7:35 AM

The city of Flint couldn't rejoin the Detroit water system or lower water rates for residents under the terms of a loan the state issued to Flint's emergency manager in April 2015, show documents obtained by the Michigan Democratic Party under the state's Freedom of Information Act and provided to MLive. Then-emergency manager Jerry Ambrose proposed the \$7 million loan from the state's Local Emergency Financial Assistance Loan Board as a way to pay down the city's remaining deficit.

March 17 Hearing Set on Whether to Stop Flint Water Bills

By AP for ABC News 03/01/16 9:59 PM

A judge will hear arguments in two weeks on a request to stop Flint from charging people for water during the lead crisis. Attorneys representing Beatrice Boler and other residents are seeking an injunction. They say Flint is sending bills despite supplying "undrinkable" water.

Flint Water Crisis: Water In Some Sites Still Contaminated With Lead, Hearing Date On Water Bills Set For March 17

By Sneha Shankar, International Business Times 03/02/16 1:50 AM

Although five months have passed since Flint, Michigan, changed its water supply because of problems with lead contamination and discolored drinking water, about 9 percent of the city's sites tested positive for more than permissible amount of lead in water, the governor's office said Tuesday. Meanwhile, a date of March 17 has been set for a judge to hear arguments on a request that seeks to stop Flint's administration from charging the residents for water during the crisis, the Associated Press reported.

Congressional panel wants info from Snyder, Flint, EPA

By Todd Spangler, Detroit Free Press 03/01/16 7:26 PM

A congressional committee investigating high levels of lead found in Flint's tap water is asking Gov. Rick Snyder, Flint Mayor Karen Weaver and the head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for any and all documents related to the city's decision to change its water supply. U.S. House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, signed the letters to the three, as did U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, the committee's top Democrat.

EPA says Flint water tests show some progress made

By Kristen Jordan Shamus, Detroit Free Press 03/01/16 10:18 PM

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy said Tuesday that the most recent tests of tap water in Flint suggest that phosphates being added to the water are beginning to control corrosion and slow the leaching of lead into the public water supply. But it's still not safe to drink unfiltered water, she acknowledged.

EPA Officials Collecting Data on Flint Water Lead Levels

By AP for ABC News 03/01/16 7:17 PM

Federal officials are collecting data on the levels of lead in Flint's water system and hope to be

able to share the findings in April, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy said. "Hopefully, by next month, we'll be able to give people news — whether that is a clean bill of health or not, I don't know," McCarthy told reporters after touring a food bank Tuesday in the city. "But again, the challenge with lead will still remain, because lead is in people's homes."

EPA chief: Protective film building up in Flint pipes

By Jacob Carah, Detroit News 03/01/16 6:35 PM

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy said the city's lead levels are dropping as the municipal water system builds up a protective biofilm in the pipes. McCarthy, who on Tuesday visited Flint for a second time, said the pipes are recoating with a phosphate barrier that prevents lead from leaching into the drinking water.

Other News & Opinions

Flint water song to get on-air debut tonight on 'Nightly Show'

By Julie Hinds, Detroit Free Press 03/02/16 4:43 PM

A new song about the Flint water crisis will be spotlighted tonight on "The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore." Rapper Jon Connor, who was born and raised in Flint, will perform "Fresh Water For Flint" with "Grease Live!" star Keke Palmer, who sings on the track.

NIEHS science informs federal response to Flint water crisis

By Eddy Ball, NIEHS News-NIH

NIEHS and National Toxicology Program (NTP) Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., was front and center Feb. 11, presenting background data on lead and the current plans for addressing the environmental emergency in Flint, Michigan. Birnbaum spoke in Bethesda, Maryland at a meeting of directors of the 27 institutes and centers of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Flint is a city with a declining population and a high rate of poverty, which is now under federal and state emergency declarations because of its lead-contaminated water. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), under the stewardship of Nicole Lurie, M.D., HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), is in charge of the federal response in Flint.

Is Your Water Safe to Drink?

By Philip Landrigan, Huffington Post 03/02/16 1:56 PM

The United States has made enormous progress against lead poisoning in the last 40 years. Since 1976 when lead was taken out of paint and gasoline, our country has seen reductions of over 90 percent in the average blood lead levels of children. Unfortunately, lead poisoning is still with us. The predominant source of exposure is old, lead-based paint found inside deteriorating homes, but another source is aging water pipes that contain lead, as residents of the city of Flint, Michigan now know all too well.

Doctors In Flint, Mich., Push A Healthy Diet To Fight Lead Exposure

By Rebecca Kruth, NPR 03/02/16 10:12 AM [radio clip]

"Diets high in iron, calcium or vitamin C can limit the absorption of lead in your body and promote its excretion," says Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, a pediatrician in Flint. It was her study that found that the percentage of kids with elevated lead levels in Flint doubled after the city switched its water source. Now Hanna-Attisha is trying to get the word out to parents that healthy eating can mitigate the effects of lead exposure.

Q&A: What Really Happened to the Water in Flint, Michigan?

By Jayde Lovell, Scientific American 03/02/16

After Flint, Mich., switched from purchasing water via Detroit to sourcing locally from the Flint River, residents began noticing a change in water quality. One resident—Lee Anne Walters—suspected the water might be toxic, and had her water tested for lead. She brought samples to Marc Edwards, an environmental engineer at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and a world-renowned expert on water treatment.

Flint fallout: Schools across US find elevated lead levels in drinking water

By RT 03/02/16 12:02 AM

Several schools across the United States have found evidence of higher-than-acceptable levels of lead in their drinking water. This comes in the wake of the crisis in Flint, Michigan, whose high levels of lead in water lead to a state of emergency. Any facilities with aging water infrastructure are vulnerable to lead contamination, and school buildings are no exception.

New app gives quick access to Flint water crisis info

By Jiquanda Johnson, MLIVE 03/01/16 10:41 PM

A new mobile app will help Flint residents gain easy access to tips, advice and alerts regarding the city's water crisis. Empower Flint is a new mobile device tool that allows people to view news, health advice, nutrition information and get push notifications regarding the city's water including boil advisories.

Lead still found in some Flint, Michigan, water: governor

By Reuters 03/01/16 7:03 PM

Five months after Flint, Michigan, changed its water supply due to problems with lead contamination and discolored drinking water, nearly 9 percent of the city's sites tested for lead in the water continue to exceed federally acceptable limits, the governor's office said on Tuesday. Of 423 sites tested recently, lead concentration in the water at 37 sites exceeded the federal government's action level of 15 parts per billion. Of those, eight sites had lead readings above 100 parts per billion, according to a statement from Governor Rick Snyder's office.

Donations and Aid

Mark Ruffalo, activists to tour Flint in support of city in water crisis

By Roberto Acosta, MLIVE 03/02/16 10:10 AM

Actor Mark Ruffalo will be joined by activists during the "Support For Flint" Bus Tour next week to get a first-hand look at the impact of the city's water crisis and share potential solutions. Ruffalo, star of films including the Academy Award winner "Spotlight," the "Avengers" series and founder of Water Defense, a non-profit organization dedicated to clean water, is set to hit the road Monday, March 7 in the city. He will be joined by Van Jones, author, activist, and founder of Green For All, Vien Truong, an environmental justice activist and director of Green For All, and Tom Steyer, a businessman, philanthropist and founder of NextGen Climate. "The United Nations has already declared access to clean water indispensable for leading a life in human dignity, but the problems in Flint go far beyond a poisoned water supply," said Ruffalo in a statement regarding the visit.

Friends going 'Beyond H2O' for Flint children

By Amy Andrews, FOX 2 03/02/16 1:59 PM

A group of girls from the Farmington area are on a mission to make life better for children affected by the water crisis in Flint -- and they're going beyond H2O. They're working to raise money for learning activity kits for the kids. Morgan lowe, maggie bean and karina roberts are here to tell us about their efforts.

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